

SLAVERY OR THE GOVERNMENT.

Speech of the Hon. Montgomery Blair,
Postmaster-General,
Delivered before the Delegates of the Loyal National League
at Cincinnati, Ohio, May 28, 1863.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: My heart responds warmly to the feeling which induces your kind reception. I could not forego the opportunity offered by the invitation to be present on this occasion, to meet so many earnest men in the cause of our country, and to unite in your efforts to carry on the struggle and crown it with success.

SLAVERY OR THE GOVERNMENT.

A resistance against Free Government in the United States and in this age, bears upon it from the marks of insanity. The father of the conspiracy, of which the combination which now fills the country with suffering and dismay is the offspring, was on his face, as was remarked by many observers, when his last words and dying imprecations against the principles of our Constitution were read in the Senate, the ghastly aspect of a monomaniac. His conspiracy prolonged through a thirty years' gestation had even then a vitality to make itself painfully felt; and now the monstrous birth is stamped with his treasured features.

But neither the mysterious workings of oath-bound societies, nor the public agitation contrived by intrigue, in Congress, in State Legislatures and election caucuses, to engender parties, party, prepared the country to expand and meet the shock which has received. The progress of the Government has been so easy, so smooth, so glorious, it had attained such high rank with States of greater strength and renown, that scarcely any sound mind supposed it possible that an usurpation would be made to close its career by a smoke blow, as if its life were as frail as that of an infant's. There is no parallel in the history of the world of a similar assault on a vast, benevolent, popular Government. Without even an allegation of oppression on its part to provoke it, and while it was actually administered and its sway unopposed by the very men who aimed the stroke for its destruction.

But while pro-slavery made us insensible to the danger, the wise and patriotic men who founded our Government saw in Slavery, a name by which frenzy and malignant ambition might lay their work in ruins. The slavery of one race they saw was not compatible with the freedom of another. They hoped the superior race, influenced by the benign tenderness of the Government they managed and enjoyed, would ultimately extend the blessing of liberty to a dependent people, and effectually remove their disabilities on a new scale of useful and independent exertion. These considerations induced the sages on founding the Republic, not to distrust that poisonous element which they believed the vigor of the Constitution would work out of the system in time. They lived to see their road hope proved delusive.

Meantime, during the war, the fortified places these freed men may hold on the Mississippi, sea coast and elsewhere, under the control and with the support of portions of our armies, will render the river and coast commerce free to us and exclude it from the enemy. When the war ends, large numbers of the bondsmen, which it will have liberated, may still be retained, temporarily, and will be employed, under wages, in executing the plans for national defense proposed by the Military Committee of the House of Representatives, in the conversion of the intra-coastal navigation along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, now to a considerable extent completed for small boats, into a ship canal from New Orleans to New-York, and in enlarging the canal now uniting the lakes and the Mississippi. If the Erie canal shall also be enlarged, the whole region of the Mississippi and the Atlantic will be insulated and be invulnerable. The kindred measure, the Pacific Railroad designed to carry the military power of the Republic to the defense of our Pacific possessions, if ever invaded, will be the work of European enemies of our own blood, hired by the rich domain it penetrates and which the nation presents as an inheritance to those who shall be engaged in its construction.

But the mission of the Afric-American race will not be concluded in the region which has been its house of bondage. It destined glory, as a redeemed and exalted race, to be consummated in the American tropics. They will there infuse vigor, unity and enterprise, with aspirations to emulate the progressive genius of the country of their birth. They will break the fetters of Cuba, and make it the fabled Hispaniola under Cis-Atlantic influences and the favor of European nations interested in the commerce of the Indies of the West, far richer than those of the Orient. Aided with the capital and intelligence of the great commercial powers, they will make the waters of the Pacific and Atlantic flow through Central America, and they will bring their oppressed brethren from the Shallows of Africa to a Canaan in the New World.

I feel that I have given a very imperfect outline of the scheme of Scission, of the manner in which your Chief Magistrate has met the exigency, and how he proposes to make the evils which have befallen us the sources of blessings to our posterity, and to mankind.

It is inimical and unnecessary here to do more than glance at this great theme. Acute observers and some even who have skill in dealing with details have found much to complain of in the President's administration. Unquestionably many errors have been committed. Errors not only noticeable to microscopic vision, but to enlarged minds. But regarded as a whole I think he may safely ask the verdict of his contemporaries and of posterity upon his patriotism and comprehensive wisdom.

An Extraordinary Letter.

Correspondence of The N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, May 22, 1863.

Under the above caption, *The Washington Republican* of last evening copies my recent letter on the Peterhoff case, with the following most remarkable imputations and comments:

"The newspaper have for a week past been filled with surmises about changes in the Cabinet, and it has been positively affirmed that the colored agent of Mr. Seward, in this connection, was the chief cause of the recent changes. In this connection, we copy from The N. Y. Tribune of Monday last, which is alleged to be part of the plan of operations, and to have emanated from a distinguished master, now in the city. From his position, he is well informed of the secret of the case, and shows a strong desire to believe that this can be true, as it would give an extraordinary advantage for him to assume to himself the command of the slaves."

And can a State prosper under a system working such demoralization? The picture now presented in the land of slaves tells the same story which is to be found in the annals of every slave empire. All Asia has been corrupted by Slavery. Africa, its birth-place, has ever been a desert. The glorious ancient Republics perished under its influence, after reaching the highest point of civilization by the heroic virtues of a free people, and modern Europe only redeemed herself from the common fate by the extinction of the legal system that originated inidem.

Remember for the hopeful soul of our fathers, that the inherent virtue of the Constitution would extinguish Slavery, if all we felt that its permanence would be destructive to acquire it in a passive resistance to its extension, although that resistance had proved unavoidable in the first movements West of the Mississippi. It was hoped that the passage of the Missouri Compromise, and the acquisition of Texas, and the compromise line established in 1850, and reaffirmed in 1850, as the northern boundary of Slavery, would be respected. But, having secured the President, both branches of Congress, and the Supreme Court, the Slave Power resolved to break all contracts and strike for the empire of the Constitution. Kansas was taken by force, and a Slave Government was designed to be established by fraud, and the Supreme Court then affixed a principle in the Dred Scott case, which carried it all over our country. Slavery, the Court said, was a property which was held under the Constitution of the United States, and for that reason could not be excluded from the Territories by their lawful Governments. The reasoning applies to the States as well as to the Territories, for the Constitution of the United States is equally paramount in both. Their filibusters or pirates, having failed in their attempt to seize Cuba and Central America, they proposed to take these countries openly by the power of the Government.

Such were the means adopted, prior to the war, to make the Constitution of the United States, which of the Confederacy now, is an instrument to increase, enslave, and perpetuate Slavery, and make it a continental institution. But the obligation seen in the election of Lincoln, that the peaceful settlement of the ballot-box would reverse these wrongs, and prevent future aggressions, either to extend Slavery further South or to maintain it in the regions subjugated by the Supreme Court. They were prepared for this contingency. They took up arms to assert their doctrine, that Slavery was the best foundation for Government, and undertook, like Moctezumah, the propagation of their faith and institution by the sword.

It was in vain that Mr. Crittenden's appealing resolutions were passed; in vain was an amendment to the Constitution, declaring Slavery to be irreconcilable with the Union, unless abolished by the States within which it existed. No sacrifice, not even that of the Constitution, to give additional guarantees to Slavey where it existed, could save the country from war. But by means since it was now evident that Slavey must be the dominant principle in the New World. It is that domination for which they are contending. Independence is sought only as a means of effecting that object. Once possessed, by the means of the control of the Mississippi, they know the North-West would adopt the Confederate Constitution and sacrifice the freedom of the West to secure the freedom of the Mississippi, and that the Middle States and even New-England will not be slow to follow suit.

And when we remember how, on the mere menace of dominion, the country required in that Dred Scott case, which alone distinguishes the Rebel Government from our own, we may doubt that, if the rebellion is successful, we will yield that point to the Union. Robert Toombs will yet roll off his slaves on Bunker Hill unless he can't. The controversy, therefore, is between Slavey and the Government.

THE PROCLAMATION.

President, to whom the defense of the Government and the command of its armies belongs, has labored to avert the dangers with which we are surrounded, by various measures in aid of the armed forces he had sent to the field. He would save the Union with or without Slavery—would save it any way, at whatever cost. The Union in peace under the Constitution was again and again his overtire. If there could be no assurance of this with Rebels bent on subverting the Republic to establish an oligarchy of slaveholders, then to the loyal friends of free government in the South he tendered emancipation with compensation, and a deliverance by colonization from a war of races, which could only end in the extirpation of the negro race, or amalgamation with it. This failing, after nearly two years of opposition, and forbearance to exert to the utmost the military power conferred on him under the Constitution, the President felt himself constrained to

issue that Proclamation of Freedom to the slaves, who were in every sense the enemy's sinews of war. Some of them were found fighting in their ranks, multitudes in creating and destroying their fortifications, the greater mass in the fields at home, enabling their conscription to drag every able-bodied white man into the fields of battle against the Government, who when there are literally fed and paid by the products of that slave labor, to secure and extend which was the pronounced object of the war.

This proclamation of the President was reluctantly advanced, because, however necessary, it proceeded solely from himself as being alone invested by the Constitution with the direction of the military power of the nation, and because in deciding on the necessity of its application in the way which the exigency before him seemed to demand, he placed the Government in a position *from which there was no retreat*. The proclamation *to slaves* to weaken the enemy, commissing the nation irrevocably to make good the pledge by the *abstain extraction of its power*. It not only creates an obligation to the bondsmen whose action it is meant to control, but it is an implied *pledge of honor* to the *free* powers whose conduct before him seems to demand, he placed the Government in a position of little consequence whether he, as an individual, retain a seat in the Cabinet for the next brief twenty months or no. But it is a cause of deep concern to the country if it shall continue to have a Secretary of State in times like these, whose confidential and most intimate social relations are found with foreign Embassadors rather than with any co-member of the Cabinet or earnestly loyal friends of his Government. Is not this Peterhoff affair an alarming case in point?

In one of the Secretary's contingent moods,

his breast filled with social ambitions and his heart yielding to the generous pressure, he pledges Lord Lyons that the Peterhoff's mail shall be given up!

An official note is addressed to the Secretary of the Navy, and a copy of said note immediately furnished the British Minister, as an earnest of his benevolent overtures, thus it comes before the American people via the British House of Parliament that the Peterhoff's contingent mood, is

the first to turn his back upon the proclamations of his life, and upon those friends more particularly who have toiled onward, mid obloquy and reproach with him. It is a matter of little consequence whether he, as an individual, retain a seat in the Cabinet for the next brief twenty months or no. But it is a cause of deep concern to the country if it shall continue to have a Secretary of State in times like these, whose confidential and most intimate social relations are found with foreign Embassadors rather than with any co-member of the Cabinet or earnestly loyal friends of his Government. Is not this Peterhoff affair an alarming case in point?

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